

# A Political Resister: From Hitler to Park

By David Kleinberg

"I come to speak for those silenced in South Korea."

Nicola Geiger, a one-time Hitler Youth movement member who has spent the last seven years in Japan helping the Korean resistance movement, didn't seem like the person to be making such a statement.

The robust 54-year-old Ms. Geiger had stopped off at The Chronicle offices midway through a six-month national tour to muster support for the imprisoned opponents of South Korean president Chung Hee Park.

"It was one of those say-hello-and-stand-back interviews with Ms. Geiger, her full face beaming with cheer, launching into an obviously well-prepared, often-repeated political diatribe against the Park regime, which has ruled South Korea by martial law for the last two years.

To the casual observer, her passion may appear to be at odds with the Quaker movement, in which she has been quite active. Ms. Geiger herself feels that it springs from her belief in Buddhist precepts.

"My father was a Zen Buddhist and a Socialist," she recalled, thinking back to the dark days of Germany. "He thought it was the task of the century to create a global consciousness.

"It springs from the Buddhist spiritual principle that from out of the quietness at the center comes action, and then you try to return to the center."

The spirit of her time,



NICOLA GEIGER

A dream went sour

however, was nationalism, and, despite her father's opposition, Nicola got caught up in it, joining the Hitler Youth Movement.

"You have to know how miserable it was in Germany in 1933," she said. "In school, you'd get a sandwich and the students would take half of it home because there was nothing to eat.

"The Hitler Youth Movement actually wasn't that bad," she added. "We were taught a vision—a beautiful people, building a beautiful country, working, living in peace, with three meals a day."

When her Jewish friends began to disappear, Ms. Geiger realized the dream had gone sour. She joined the student resistance in 1936, and, to some degree,

has been fighting the fight and pursuing the vision ever since.

"This is why I can understand what is happening in South Korea today," she said, looking like she was ready to give the table in front of her a good slam for emphasis. "Park is an admirer of Hitler. Hitler did this very well too, total control of the press, putting opposition in jail."

The way Ms. Geiger, a naturalized American, views it, the United States, through its support of Park, has the fate of Korea in its hands. South Korean political prisoners, from intellectuals to students, must be freed and the government returned to democratic rule.

South Korea has been in a state of political turmoil since Park, a soldier turned politician, granted himself almost unlimited power and disbanded the national assembly in 1972.

"South Korea," she said, "has become a subcontractor for Japan and the multi-national corporations. Until 1945, Japan had militarily occupied South Korea. Now Japan has economically occupied the country, exporting her heavy air-pollution industries."

Ms. Geiger maintains that the situation in South Korea is different than in most Asian nations. Dissidents opposed to dictatorships are usually pro-Communist. In South Korea, she says, the opposition is both "against the dictatorship and against Communism."

And that's exactly the message she's been trying to

spread in a series of church, university and press engagements.

"The idea is to raise consciousness and awareness among the American people," Americans, she said with her voice rising, "must write letters to their Congressmen saying, 'Stop at once all military and economic help until and unless South Korea restores constitutional government.'"

Ms. Geiger claimed she's met a great response on her tour — "people are realizing that East Asia consists of a few more parts than China and Japan" — but, when pressed, admitted she found some things disturbing in this country.

She feels that America has become isolationist, "rather tired after being involved with Watergate... emotionally exhausted... very self-indulgent, involved with personal salvation... things like Gestalt and encounter groups.

"I became so depressed," she said, "when I see so many middle-aged Americans growing old with such little dignity, trying so hard to look young."

She talked about the most recent of her 24 visits to Korea — the one last March.

On that March trip, she visited an old friend, a government accountant. The first thing he did was to put his hand over his mouth and write on a piece of paper that she should not talk, that the house might be bugged.

In the garden, they talked. The accountant's son had been taken away, arrested.

"These men," Ms. Geiger said of her friends, "are no Communists. They have a dream..."

*This I didn't say  
Instead I had deep conversations*

*I thought you might like to hear this background on me*